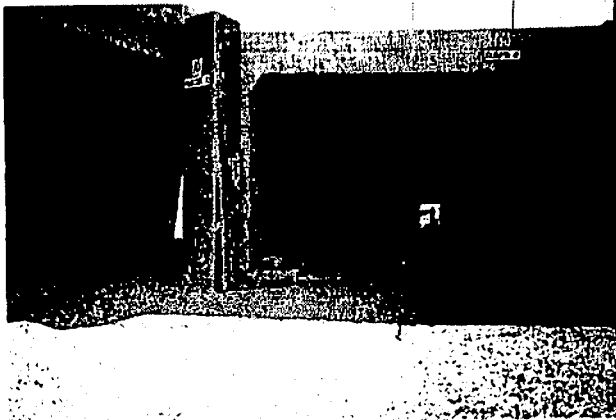


A Commuter's Guide to the Old Colony Railroad

By RICHARD PRONE



Rte. 3 underpass/tunnel in Kingston, viewed from track level — Plymouth spur (left), Kingston spur (right).

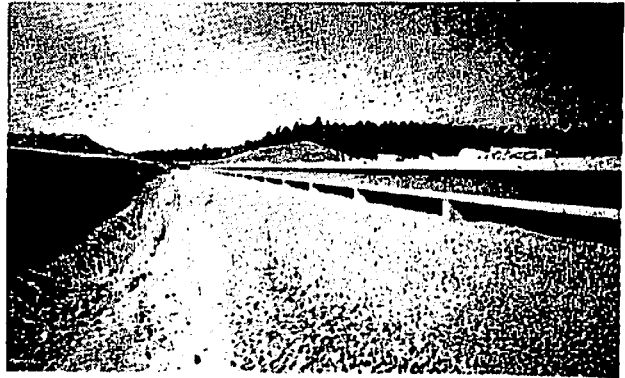
For the past 5 years or so, it seems like nary a week passes without some controversy arising over the rebuilding of the Old Colony Railroad.

As a quick recap, 2 branches of the Old Colony, the Kingston/Plymouth line and the Middleboro line, are scheduled to begin operation in September, 1997. Most of the track and station work is finished on these branches, with the signal system being the one item which still needs substantial time to be completed. However, the MBTA is confident that the start-up September date will be kept.

The third branch of the Old Colony, the Greenbush line to Scituate, is currently under environmental review, with construction due to start in late 1997 or early 1998, depending on the disposition of a recently filed lawsuit against the state by the town of Hingham to block the planning and construction of the line.

So, with all the literal and figurative dust finally

Duxbury Clipper, Wednesday, September 4, 1996



Kingston Station, under construction, located off mall exit.

starting to settle, Joe Commuter settles back into his easy chair and asks "What's in it for me?"

Depending on where you work and the time you commute, the simple answer is: Plenty.

The 2 primary stations available to Duxbury residents are (1) Kingston station, 2 minutes and 9/10 of a mile off Exit 8 on Rte. 3 (Independence Mall exit), and (2) Halifax station, about 6 miles from the intersection of Rte. 53 and Winter St. in Duxbury.

The schedule from Kingston to South Station, Boston, will be 58 minutes. Halifax, the next station up the line from Kingston, will take 53 minutes.

By today's fare structure, Kingston will be a "Zone 8" classification, with a 12-ride ticket costing \$40. An MBTA monthly pass, good on all modes of



Rebuilt Jones River Bridge, off Landing Rd., Kingston. Notice new concrete poured around old stonework.

transportation, will cost \$128. The monthly pass is by far the most economical purchase for the daily commuter, with a round-trip averaging out to only \$6.

Halifax, a "Zone 7" station, will cost \$37.50 for a 12-ride ticket, and \$120 for a monthly pass, about \$5.71 per round trip. Tickets purchased individually on a day-to-day basis cost about a dollar more each way per day, so the multi-ride tickets and monthly passes present substantial savings.

Parking at commuter rail stations costs \$1 per day. The Kingston station will have space for over 1000 cars, with Halifax capacity at 275. Both stations have room for expansion if necessary.

Plymouth will also have a station, located near Cordage Park, which will be used primarily during off-peak hours and weekends for tourism. A junction will be located between the west side of Rte. 3 and the Jones River Bridge, and the line will split at this location. The main Kingston commuter line will go under Rte. 3 twice as it negotiates a sharp curve in front of the L. Knife beer warehouse, while the Plymouth spur will proceed along the original line, which is bull's-eye straight to North Plymouth.

The line has been designed as an FRA "Class 4" railroad, which means much of the track will be



Halifax Station, under construction, located off Rte. 36.

authorized 70 mph. It is very important that motorists heed all warning signals at grade crossings, all of which will be equipped with flashing lights and gates. Although public safety posters with callous wording such as "Tie Goes to the Train" slogans have been criticized as a little too sarcastic, the message is clear.

Directions to Stations: Using the intersection of Rte. 53 and Winter St. as my starting point, it took about 13 minutes to get to Halifax. Proceed all the way down Winter St. to Rte. 27, 1.9 miles. Take a right on Rte. 27, go exactly one mile, and take a left just beyond Silver Lake High School to Lake St. Go one mile to the end, take a right on Grove St. Do not cross the railroad tracks (keep them on your left). Proceed on Grove St. almost 2 miles (it turns into Oak St. when you cross into Halifax). Take a left on Rte. 36, and the station is 4/10 of a mile on your right. As mentioned, travelling at or close to the speed limit, the trip took 13 minutes.

Kingston station, being Exit 8 (the mall exit) needs little explaining. The MBTA has purchased existing roads in and around the Mall area to improve access.

All stations are high-level 800' canopied platforms with handicap access. Equipment will consist of single and bi-level air conditioned upholstered coaches, with a seating capacity of 120 and 185, respectively.

Service frequency will see 5 inbound trains in the morning spaced about 30 minutes apart from 5:45 am until about 8:30 am. Service then drops off to about every 2 hours during the day, and the reverse takes place in the afternoon leaving Boston. Trains will run about every 30 minutes between 4 and 7 pm, and then every 1 1/2 hours or so until about 11:30, when the last train will leave for Kingston. Weekend service will start later in the morning, with less frequency during the day, and end slightly earlier.

Having had the opportunity to view track and station work and to review signal plans, from an operational perspective, the Old Colony restoration is a first-class railroad resurrection. No effort has been spared to ensure that this investment will serve present and future generations with maximum efficiency and convenience.